

The Good the Bad and the Ugly: MAX in Review

Posted At : October 3, 2007 5:42 PM | Posted By : Mark Kruger

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This is the first MAX I've attended since the Adobe bought Macromedia. My overall take is positive. Adobe has certainly provided a great venue for developer networking. The community lounge, "AIR" park and the various spaces are configured to be comfortable "hang outs" centering around various technologies and by and large they work really well. All the sessions are recorded and the docs are available pretty quickly.

The conference was pretty lavish as well. The last 2 nights featured parties with an open bar and excellent food (including late night pizza!). The meals were excellent and the conference facility (McCormick place west) was awesome. And now... the rest of the story....

In the minus column however, the conference was exceedingly expensive. CF Webtools spent 2500.00 in hotels for 3 attendees (ouch). We stayed at a conference Hotel (the Chicago Hilton). Admittedly this is a 4 star hotel and probably worth the cost if you are into that sort of thing. I was in my room around 7:00 and a little lady stopped by and asked if I wanted "turn down" service. I turned her down (at age 45 I'm managed to learn how to manage 3 or 4 layers of blankets and sheets). Still, it was nice they were concerned. I could have been laying there on top of the sheets shivering all night thinking "I sure wish I knew how to get into these covers." Later of course I found that they give you 4 chocolates (one for each star I think) so I happily accepted the service.

This conference is not Coldfusion focus. Let me qualify that by saying there was a lot of Coldfusion going on. The number of classes devoted to CF was high - especially in relation to the footprint that CF has on Adobe's overall business. I think that reflects the fact that CF developers are somewhat more likely to come to the conference. In addition, I went to several workshops focused around Ajax and Flex and virtually all of them used CF in their samples (because of the ease of remote object and web service calls). Still, this conference is *mostly* about AIR, Adobe authoring products, Flex and emerging standards like AJAX.

Pardon me for being a Grinch but the noise noise noise noise noise noise! It seems Adobe sound engineers all formerly worked for Van Halen. Do we really need 130 decibel base to introduce the 45 year old Indian business man who works as the COO for adobe? The social events featured great food and free booze but I had to scream to make myself heard. Mike, Jason and I were standing at a table hollering at each other and we were joined by a charming couple. The fellow had the hang of the shouting but the lady could not make herself heard. I was carrying on a lively conversation saying "yes... ahuh.. oh? I see... interesting..." I still have no idea what the conversation was about. She seemed to think it was all right. I hope I didn't promise to be a godfather or anything. We probably just need a "fuddy duddy" lounge for the myself and the other 10 people over 40.

Finally, the QA on the workshops was much lower than in the past. In previous conferences the workshops were better prepared and had a more "uniform" feel to them - as if everyone was on the same page. I went to several workshops that were excellent because the speakers were excellent (as speakers). I went to several others where the knowledge level was good - but the speaker was not a great communicator. Now this is always the case at *every* conference, but when the "team" has not been

prepped it tends to stand out and make the workshop less useful.

Despite these setbacks I'd say the conference was a success for me as well as Adobe. There was a real push for AIR. In case you've been wrapped up in the recent Britney Spears debacle and haven't been paying attention to Adobe technology - AIR is Adobe's attempt at making a web-desktop-web application possible. The idea behind AIR is amazing *and it's clever*. Adobe's main developer communities are Web based (largely inherited from Macromedia). If they can be leveraged to create desktop apps using their current skill set then Adobe has the potential to make inroads into the desktop applications space. It's a good plan and it has some potential. I love what I'm seeing. So far most of the applications have been "widgety" but there is some definite momentum behind the project.

I also enjoyed the session on Application security by Shlomy Gantz. I will say more about that in my next post.